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Official Records

16th plenary meeting
Friday, 28 September 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Zoran Milanović, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia.

Mr. Zoran Milanović, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Zoran Milanović, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Milanović (Croatia): I am pleased to address the Assembly for the first time since assuming the office of Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia.

We live in times of rapid changes, some of which are positive, others deeply troubling. The world is becoming more interconnected, which strengthens economic opportunities and accelerates development. Advances in science and technology are bringing measurable progress for humankind. The profound transformations in North Africa have raised the hopes of people for real democracy and freedom.

However, there is also much that is disturbing. Conflicts in many parts of the world are wreaking havoc on innocent civilians. Our planet is experiencing growing environmental damage. The global financial and economic crisis is still negatively affecting the majority of countries in both the developing and the developed world. International peace and security are under strain from terrorism, extremism, poverty, inequality, human rights abuses and persecution.

In confronting such challenges, Croatia acts in the global arena on the basis of two fundamental tenets. We stand ready to assume our responsibility towards our own citizens and our neighbours in the region and to be a constructive actor in Europe and a reliable partner to all peace-loving countries in the world. We actively promote solidarity with vulnerable groups and communities and with the poor, the needy, the defenceless and the underprivileged. Responsibility and solidarity are two central principles of our engagement in the United Nations in the pursuit of peace and security and in advancing freedom and democracy, protecting human rights, enhancing sustainable development, respecting international law, ensuring equality and social justice and promoting the rule of law.

This year, Croatia marks the twentieth anniversary of its membership of our global Organization. We are grateful to the United Nations for playing an important role in our country's struggle for political independence, international recognition and full territorial integrity. We have great expectations of the United Nations. As a beacon of multilateralism, it provides the only

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universal framework for finding common solutions to international crises and current challenges. However, we must ask ourselves whether the United Nations does enough and what we can do collectively to improve its performance.

We support the United Nations reform process, which seeks to enhance its accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and transparency. United, we are stronger than alone. But let me stress something. If each of our countries becomes more democratic, more developed, better run, more stable and more responsible, our combined strength will rise exponentially.

The topic of the general debate, namely, resolving international disputes by peaceful means, is at the very heart of the United Nations. The Organization was built to prevent war and to keep the peace. We highly value the instruments of preventive diplomacy and mediation and other peaceful means of resolving disputes. In particular, we see merit in resorting to the International Court of Justice, the Permanent Court of Arbitration and other existing institutions. We ourselves have done so. We agreed to settle the border issue with our neighbour, Slovenia, through arbitration.

However, we must understand that, in the long run, peace cannot be imposed on parties to a dispute. Each situation has its own pace and dynamics. However, there should be no excuse for a lack of genuine effort. Moreover, without a thorough resolution of issues, there can be no room for a true reconciliation process to take place. In that vein, it is reassuring to note that support for the peaceful resolution of disputes comes from many parts of the world, including countries that have opted to use military means to settle disputes with their immediate neighbours in the recent past.

Not everyone, however, shares equal respect for peace and international law. This year has been particularly unfortunate in terms of the efficiency of the United Nations in the area of conflict prevention, mediation and the protection of civilians. We have witnessed appalling events, and thousands of civilian victims have been exposed to heavy arms and the brutality of armed forces and paramilitary groups. The lack of univocal action against the most severe violations of the United Nations Charter is deeply troubling. We must resolutely counter such an obsession with violence and repression. We should not shy away from our responsibilities.

At this juncture, I must strongly condemn the recent killing of the United States Ambassador to Libya. People come from different cultures, legal traditions, historical backgrounds and forms of Government. Violence can never be an acceptable response to freedom of speech.

Like many previous speakers, I stress the importance of keeping strong international attention on Syria. We align ourselves with the position of the European Union on the situation in Syria. We see the need for prompt action on two fronts. The immediate priority is to stop the loss of life on both sides in the conflict, to provide humanitarian aid and assistance to the Syrian people and to support plans for the country's economic and political stabilization. Further fighting and militarization will only exacerbate the suffering and make a peaceful resolution of the crisis more difficult. In addition, we have to remain committed to pursuing a Syrian-led political transition that will meet the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people. Resolving the crisis is our common responsibility. We therefore call unceasingly for the full respect of international law, especially international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law.

There is no peace without justice and there is no justice without the rule of law and without the fight against impunity. We support concepts of human security and the responsibility to protect, as well as their implementation and improvement through an open and constructive dialogue within the framework of the United Nations. We also support the work of the International Criminal Court. Undoubtedly, there are sufficient conflict prevention tools at our disposal. The question remains whether we can muster enough resolve to use them.

Syria is the most recent and most striking example of the need for a greater role for preventive diplomacy and mediation in the early phases of a conflict. The later we engage, the more divided we are. Timely prevention is crucial for successful conflict resolution. Prevention is also indispensable for countering other threats that destabilize countries and societies. Let me cite an example. If a country is forced to fight corruption through its law enforcement bodies and the judiciary, that is usually a sign that it is too late, that corruption has already left its corrosive imprint on society. Our goal is to invest efforts aimed at building a society in which corruption is not an endemic phenomenon, in which elected officials in Government structures demonstrate responsibility towards their public office. That in turn

encourages citizens to foster a corruption-free culture through their daily behaviour. When leaders lead by positive example, people tend to follow. That is because culture flows from structure. That is also the reason why, at the level of the United Nations, we provide our full support to the implementation, wider acceptance and universalization of international legal instruments on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament, countering terrorism and preventing corruption.

The global economic crisis combined with the effects of globalization has contributed to the rise of popular distrust in the capability of political leaders to deliver needed solutions. That calls for greater responsibility, better governance and stronger cooperation among States, civil society and the private sector. The Croatian Government has made notable progress in making its work more transparent and more available to its citizens. As a member of the Open Government Partnership initiative, we have become active in the fields of fiscal transparency, access to information, information technology and civil society participation. We are pleased to host the Second European Outreach and Support Meeting of the Initiative on 4 and 5 October in Dubrovnik, where we expect to see the sharing of best practices and further promotion of cooperation between Governments and civil society organizations.

Croatia has undergone an extensive but successful political, economic and social transition in a fairly short period of time. For that reason, we have a special understanding and first-hand experience of the interwoven nature of peace, security, development and the promotion and protection of human rights. Today we are sharing our knowledge and experiences with countries in the region of South-Eastern Europe and with countries emerging from crises, where our post-conflict understanding in nation- and institution-building is particularly relevant.

Croatia is currently a Vice-Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. My country stands ready to assume its responsibility for creating more relevant, better-performing and more empowered peacebuilding structures. Croatia has already joined the Civilian Capacity Project's CAPMATCH initiative designed to address the State-building needs of fragile and conflict-affected countries by offering our help in various fields of expertise gained through our own political transition, post-conflict rehabilitation and unique European Union accession process. Promotion and protection of human rights at the universal level remains one of the cornerstones of the role of the United Nations in the world. Further development of the capacity of the Human Rights Council is of the utmost importance if we are to address seriously and efficiently urgent human rights situations and crises.

We give special attention to continually improving the degree of respect accorded the fundamental human rights of women and girls in different post-conflict societies. Women and children do not have armies to protect them or trade unions to negotiate on their behalf. Yet, more and more women are becoming the primary breadwinners in their families. The empowerment of women and their full and equal participation in societies are prerequisites for security, economic opportunity, effective governance and social development. Croatia will also continue with its active contribution to the work of the United Nations human rights forums, in particular safeguarding the rights of vulnerable members of society, such as lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgendered persons, promoting the moratorium on the use of death penalty and ensuring the right to conscientious objection to military service.

In times of economic uncertainty, be it due to financial crisis or long-term poverty, some tend to downplay the importance of human rights or of consolidating democracy. Every day we witness the sad realities of starving children, deaths from preventable communicable diseases, inadequate education and health systems, and the continuous degradation of the ecosystem. Challenges we are facing require integrated solutions across interconnected issues and the further strengthening of the multilateral architecture. We welcome the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and encourage its follow-up process. We look forward to more energetic work on the implementation of sustainable development goals, which should complement existing commitments and encompass all three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and synergistic way. Croatia sees the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies as a cornerstone for the achievement of balanced integration of sustainable development.

Croatia is firmly devoted to participation in those processes, in particular in the fields of education and gender equality. Education is a sector which builds a firm foundation for responding to the challenges of pursuing a post-2015 development framework.

Therefore, Croatia salutes the launching of the Secretary-General's Education First initiative and is pleased that the Croatian President has been invited to join the steering group known as the Group of Member State Champions.

I have already mentioned Croatia's successful post-conflict transition. In addition to having joined NATO since 2009, Croatia will become the twenty-eighth member of the European Union (EU) next year. Our international engagement is visible and strong. Croatia has been an active participant in United Nations peacekeeping missions, and I praise our women and men who have risked their lives for the common good. We have been providing substantial contributions to international efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and improve the living conditions of its people, highlighting the need for the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of women and children. Croatia is also actively participating in EU meetings at a time when the Union is intensively trying to find ways of overcoming the crisis and assuming its rightful place in the world.

Let me emphasize that Croatia greatly appreciates the role that the EU has been playing in the United Nations as a significant and positive force behind a number of initiatives. At the same time, for Croatia, the process of EU accession was primarily an exercise in institution-building and State transition. We built a stronger State so we can play a more substantive role in world affairs.

The perspective of EU membership has proved to be the main motivator and catalyst for social and political reforms. We want our neighbours in South-Eastern Europe to undertake the same demanding but rewarding road. We do not intend to assume a mentoring role in the region, but we stand ready to share our experiences and contribute constructively to the reforms in neighbouring countries based on democracy and European values.

A peaceful and prosperous South-Eastern Europe is in Croatia's strategic interest. Our vision is not just a region devoid of war. We strive to achieve genuine political, societal and economic development. We want people, especially young women and men, to have better standards of living and better prospects, to live in a clean environment and in a well-organized State with fully functioning institutions, to speak less about what was and much more about what could be.

That reminds me of a quotation by Croatian public health expert Dr. Andrija Štampar, a man who founded the World Health Organization decades ago, who once said that, "All people, regardless of whether they are rich or poor, have the right to be healthy!" I agree. Only healthy and self-confident people can shape a healthy and progressive society. It is our primary responsibility, individual and collective, to build such a world and bequeath it to our children.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Zoran Milanović, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Patrice Emery Trovoada, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Patrice Emery Trovoada, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Patrice Emery Trovoada, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Trovoada (Sao Tome and Principe) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, on behalf of the Government of Sao Tome and Principe, and in my own name, I would like to congratulate Vuk Jeremić on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I am convinced that his experience as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia will be a most positive contribution to strengthening the affirmation of the principles of the United Nations Charter for world security and peace, and I trust that he will lead the work of this session with clarity and balance.

The Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe also wishes to express its great appreciation for the work of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and for his role in expanding our Organization and encouraging it to continue its efforts to achieve the objectives of world peace and security. I would also like to take this

opportunity to thank Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser for his highly positive contribution during the sixty-sixth session.

As it did during the debates of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe reiterates its hope that the United Nations will play a key role in mediating international conflicts. Unfortunately, today we continue to look on with concern as conflicts that could jeopardize international peace and security persist and further exacerbate the deep economic and financial crisis that is devastating the world. Sadly, our Organization continues to suffer from roadblocks that prevent urgent decisions from being taken and that undermine this forum's credibility. That inaction translates into impunity for leaders who martyrize their own peoples, paving the way for more international disorder, despair and the sentiment of injustice that is experienced when peoples receive unequal treatment.

We need no further evidence of the urgency for in-depth reforms of our Organization, primarily the Security Council, than our inability to put an end to the horrific images of children, symbols of purity and innocence, who are killed daily in Syria, to prevent the destruction of the world's historic and cultural heritage, as by gangs of destructive criminals in Mali and in Afghanistan, and to forestall coups d'état or obvious attempts to destabilize States and democratically elected Governments that in fact solve nothing and irreparably delay the lengthy process of building democracy and fighting poverty.

We must prevent the disintegration of territories and remedy the abnormal and degrading situations of peoples who have already suffered from the poverty and exclusion created by a lack of democratic leadership or of effective and democratic rule of law. In the specific case of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, with which Sao Tome and Principe maintains deeply rooted historic, cultural and linguistic links, the international community should bring both firmness and persistence to bear in finding a credible, inclusive and lasting solution that will ensure that coups d'état do not recur in that country. To do so necessarily requires a reform of the armed forces as well as a strong warning to the political class as a whole to make a steadfast commitment to respect political dialogue and democratic legality. On our side, we will continue to make efforts, in cooperation with the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and other engaged regional and international organizations, to guarantee a better future for the people of Guinea-Bissau.

Regarding the occupation of the north of the Republic of Mali by groups of terrorists and the persistent conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sao Tome and Principe acknowledges and applauds the efforts the international community has made through the United Nations and the African Union to establish peace, security and stability. However, it seems that it is becoming increasingly essential for us to ask the States that share borders with those two African countries to establish more effective, intelligent and effective ways to cooperate, based on trust and on a matrix of mutually beneficial and realistic economic interests.

It is common knowledge that the forces of destabilization, despair and terror are fuelled and furthered by differences and distrust between States, which in turn paralyses the international decision-making process. However, we must point out positive signs in the trends of a few conflicts on the African continent, such as the cases of the Republics of the Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia. Consequently, we cannot fail to applaud the recent agreement signed by the Republic of the Sudan and South Sudan. Through that framework, the two countries will be able to live in peace and harmony. We also welcome the positive role of the African Union Mission in Somalia, which paves the way to returning the political, economic and social situation of that country and the region to normalcy. Moreover, in our opinion, the important recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on the situation concerning the Western Sahara (S/2012/197) are a positive asset for a permanent resolution.

The social movements that took place in North Africa in 2011, which had the merit of reinstating the right to freedom and democracy for the different peoples, were popular movements that in many cases were mobilized through social networking and modern instruments of technical communication. Various situations of insecurity and reprehensible acts, as well as the acts recently committed in Benghazi of which American diplomats were the victims, raise the issue of how we may live in this new context of the circulation and dissemination of images and information at the global level, in a world that we want to be free, open and tolerant, but in which large segments of the world population still live in a state of extreme poverty, with no access to education and with the growing conviction that they face exclusion and discrimination.

How do we deal with the offences committed by people, including even some persons with public political responsibilities such as State leaders, who fail to recognize the right of other peoples and States to exist? In that regard, we would like to take the opportunity that this platform affords us to express to the mourning families of diplomats, journalists, members of non-governmental organization and peacekeepers our sincere and deep condolences as well as our unfailing solidarity. Our ongoing obligation to work to build a better world and to invest in education and the promotion of human and democratic values is fundamental, beginning with Member States complying with all United Nations resolutions.

The massacres in Syria must cease, the integrity and security of the State of Israel must be effectively guaranteed, the Palestinian people must have their own State, the embargo against Cuba must end, countries, including Iran, must have the right to civil nuclear technology and must scrupulously observe the commitments that that entails, and polluters must be the principal payers. It must be our ambition, and not a mere hope, to ensure that we return here next year with an agenda that includes fewer of these troublesome issues, many of which are recurring.

We are pleased to note a few positive signs in the dialogue between the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China on the one hand, and, on the other, the willingness of the United States Congress and the European Parliament to admit Taiwan as a member of international organizations. Sao Tome and Principe supports initiatives such as these, which will make it possible for the people of Taiwan to make a significant contribution to international issues without ignoring the necessity for the two parties in the Straits of Formosa to work peacefully to agree to frame and normalize their relations.

The High-level Meeting that preceded the general debate was an excellent opportunity for Member States to share information on how democratic reforms are being implemented and the rule of law strengthened both in individual countries and at the international level. It is very pleasing that this discussion is leading to significant progress in implementing the democratic and institutional reforms that can help to strengthen the rule of law, internally and internationally. In that regard, Sao Tome and Principe congratulates the Republic of Angola on its recent successful and transparent general elections, since they also constitute another step towards strengthening the democratic process in its sister country of Sao Tome and Principe.

Threats to our global security, particularly transnational crimes such as piracy and the trafficking and sale of arms and drugs, are a matter of great concern for Sao Tome and Principe, a country with a long coastline located in the Gulf of Guinea. Such events are threats that we cannot ignore; they demand that we cooperate as closely as possible both with the States we share the coastline with and the other partners and organizations that have experience in dealing with such issues, and adopt mechanisms — which we resolve to strengthen — for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts caused by organized crime in order to improve our collective security.

In that context, we applaud the important resolutions 2018 (2011) and 2039 (2012) adopted by the Security Council on maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. As part of the Gulf of Guinea region, we repeat our firm pledge to do everything we can, jointly with our partners, to prevent that region, rich as it is in raw materials of strategic importance to industrialized economies, from becoming a stage for maritime piracy and other scourges that hinder economic trade, peace and security in the region. To that end, we reiterate that we are absolutely ready and willing to help implement initiatives to hold an international summit on maritime piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

The substantial transformations that have occurred in the international political arena as a result of the grave global financial crisis have forced the citizens of small States, and of Sao Tome and Principe in particular, to make major sacrifices. In that regard, Sao Tome and Principe believes that the continuing international and economic financial crisis and its effects on the economies of small countries, which have included reductions and slowdowns in official international aid, tend to threaten social cohesion as well as previous improvements in fiscal discipline, the business climate and political stability itself. The acceptability of controlling and reducing public deficits in developing countries such as ours is reaching its limits where our citizens are concerned, and good governance now demands measures that can effectively jump-start our economies through productive investments.

We believe that the most vulnerable populations, in both the northern and southern hemispheres of our planet, are demanding changes in the practices and

rules of the international financial system, and new world financial governance that is better able to hold accountable the financial stakeholders and speculators who undermine the efforts of Governments and their peoples to develop economies that bring progress.

Internally, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe is making efforts to reduce poverty and increase transparency in public management and economic growth. Institutional reforms in the areas of public finance, justice and national defence, whose purpose is to strengthen the capacities of our democratic institutions and develop the country, have been progressing at a good pace. Regarding the Millennium Development Goals, for which the United Nations has set a deadline of 2015, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe can report significant progress, particularly in the areas of education, with a literacy rate of 92 per cent of the population, and health, especially in the fight against malaria. However, we realize that meeting the deadline will require further effort.

To achieve those goals, our country hopes to continue to receive support in many forms from the international community. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to extend the sincere thanks of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe to the entire international community, and in particular UNESCO and all of its member States, for designating the island of Principe a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, thus recognizing and providing further incentives for our efforts to defend and preserve the environment.

I would like to conclude by repeating that the Government of Sao Tome and Principe, which I have the honour of representing, stands ready and willing to take part in efforts to mobilize the will and synergy needed to achieve the honourable goals that guided the creation of the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Patrice Emery Trovoada, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Desalegn (Ethiopia): I would like to congratulate the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, and to thank him for the inspiring speech he made at the opening of the general debate (see A/67/PV.6). We are confident that the spirit exemplified in that speech will guide him during his presidency. Let me also take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the outgoing President.

The reason I am here on this rostrum, making my maiden speech to the General Assembly as Head of Government of the new Ethiopia, is because we lost our leader only a little more than a month ago. The passing of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is a huge loss for Ethiopia, and undoubtedly for Africa as well. He was a man of prodigious intellect who was uncompromising in his insistence that Ethiopians and Africans should own and protect their development strategies and their approaches to governance and democratization. The late Ethiopian Prime Minister, and the party he led, have facilitated the emergence of a new Ethiopia, rekindling the hopes of Ethiopians for the future and strengthening their confidence in their ability to overcome adversity.

Ethiopians proved their mettle, and what they are made of, when they received the unexpected news of the tragedy with which the nation was faced. It is an honour and a blessing to be the leader of a people who are generous in paying tribute to those, like Prime Minister Meles, who served them selflessly; a people who have the maturity and wisdom to see, and even lucidly articulate, who has done what for the nation and for the people of Ethiopia. That would naturally make any human being who is given the opportunity to lead a country ask himself what more he can do for his

people — not in words but in deeds, as our late Prime Minister often emphasized. As might be expected, doomsday scenarios for Ethiopia's future were bandied about.

But the people of Ethiopia — from north to south, from east to west, across the length and breadth of the country — were categorical in stating in unison how much they embrace the unity of the country, unity that celebrates their diversity and is built on the bedrock of their federal Constitution. Let me take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the Ethiopian people and myself, all those leaders and heads of delegation who came to Addis Ababa to be with us at our time of grief. We cherish your friendship. I wish to reiterate my condolences to the peoples and Governments of Ghana, Malawi and Guinea-Bissau, who have also lost their leaders recently.

We Ethiopians are confident that we have come a long way. Never before in its modern history has Ethiopia had the kind of rapid economic growth that it has witnessed over the last decade or so. Indeed, for the first time in its modern history, Ethiopia has begun to see a bright light at the end of the tunnel in terms of real prospects for economic transformation. We are, for sure, on a hugely promising trajectory. Our Growth and Transformation Plan, to which our late Prime Minister was devoted, and which is now embraced by our people, is designed to catapult our nation to a destination thathas long eluded it but is now within reach.

We go forward with full recognition of our responsibility, as the second most populous country in Africa, to contribute to regional integration. We foresee huge possibilities for bringing the countries of the greater Horn of Africa together. We have already gone some distance in playing a catalytic role in laying the infrastructural basis for consolidating economic ties with the countries of our region. The electric power interconnections and the road and railway networks that we have built and are in the process of building with Djibouti, the Sudan, Kenya and South Sudan are emblematic of our resolve to play our part in regional integration. We are confident that Somalia and others, without exception, will follow suit.

But our success hinges on a number of conditions being met, none of which is amenable to our unilateral initiative. First is the question of peace and stability and the challenge of extremism. Here, also, we have made much progress. Somalia is gradually coming out of the woods. We salute all those, most particularly the contributors of troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia, for the sacrifice they have made. The African Union (AU) has made an enormous contribution to laying the basis for the progress that Somalia has made. We also acknowledge the very useful cooperation between the AU and the United Nations, including their two Councils responsible for security. We have to recognize the role of partners as well. But much more needs to be done in Somalia to ensure that the new Government stands on its own feet. We would be naive, however, if we believed that the enemies of peace of Somalia and the region are completely defeated. That is why it is so critical that the momentum is not lost in Somalia and Somalia's ownership of the process of national reconciliation is strengthened. We will continue to assist Somalia and the new President of the country, Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and the people of Somalia can count on that.

We are pleased that there is also major progress in the peace process between the Sudan and South Sudan. We are confident that the two parties will maintain the momentum towards durable peace, which is the basis for ensuring the viability of both. We are indeed indebted to former President Thabo Mbeki and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for their perseverance and commitment to peace between the two sisterly countries. What has been achieved by the two parties over the last few days, which culminated in the signing of the much anticipated agreements on vital matters, is a significant breakthrough, which needs to be consolidated and used as a basis for resolving the issues still remaining. We are confident that the two parties appreciate how vital their joint effort for a win-win outcome is, not only for their peoples, but also for us all.

Peace between the Sudan and South Sudan and a close partnership between the two, above and beyond the benefit it has for us all, has for us Ethiopians an additional emotional and sentimental value. That was an issue that our late Prime Minister, even as he was struggling for his life, was following with the same intensity as before, and he continued to offer whatever added value he could bring to bear on the peace process. Let me thank both the Sudan and South Sudan for placing their trust in us, as has been so manifest in the deployment of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei. Indeed, we are proud of our troops in

Abyei, as we are of all our people serving under the United Nations flag, including those in Darfur.

Before I move on to the second challenge we face, I wish to say a few words on broader issues that help put in perspective the challenge our region faces in securing sustainable peace and stability. The major war we have to win is undoubtedly the war on poverty. The most difficult challenge we face here in developing the most effective means to wage that war is that of ensuring that the rule of law is observed, both in inter-State relations and in the domestic sphere. At its most fundamental level, the struggle against extremism is one aspect of the struggle to ensure that the rule of law is respected and the principles of tolerance are adhered to. Wherever an act of intolerance or a violation of laws occurs, sometimes in an egregious manner, as in Benghazi, it needs to be condemned.

The second challenge we face in sustaining our development agenda relates to a host of issues impinging on our capacity to ensure sustainable development. Let us be frank and admit that there is a huge deficit in international cooperation for the development of both low-income and least developed countries. At the end of the day, regardless of other impediments to development, the major bottleneck for countries such as Ethiopia for ensuring sustainable development and successfully achieving the Millennium Development Goals is related to shortfalls in development finance. We said as much in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action, and, recently, in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, but the results have been few and far between. In our view, the current global economic situation should never be allowed to detract attention from the critical need for development finance of low-income countries.

The challenge in this area is compounded and made even worse by climate change, which is a global challenge calling for responsible and wise leadership at the international level. The response should rely on full commitment to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. However boring it may be, something that is universally acknowledged bears repeating. Countries such as Ethiopia which did not contribute to climate change are nonetheless those most affected by it. But, still, we recognize our obligation. That is why Ethiopia has already opted for a green growth path, and our current five-year Growth and Transformation Plan is based on developing a green economy, the strategy for which has already been issued and is being implemented. We seek effective cooperation in this endeavour.

We had hoped that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development would achieve more than it did. Nevertheless, we look forward to meaningful and effective work by the working group on sustainable development, to which we are ready to contribute as best we can. We are also hopeful that the intergovernmental process under the auspices of the General Assembly in connection with financing for development will not turn into a filibustering exercise without any impact on this issue, which is so critical for the development of low-income countries.

As I conclude, I wish to express my agreement with previous speakers that the twenty-first century is indeed an African century. As mentioned by my brother, the President of Ghana, out of the 10 fastest growing economies in the world last year, six were African countries. I should also mention that Ethiopia was among the six. Africa is indeed changing, and changing for the better. There is no greater human rights violation than attempts to put obstacles in the way of the success of the ongoing transformations of Africa, which will have enormous salutary implications for hundreds of millions of Africans.

Africa is no longer the marginalized continent of the 1980s or even of the period a little later than that. Ethiopia will continue to play its part to ensure the success of the transformation and the success of multilateralism under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Royal Highness Prince Moulay Rachid, Prince of the Kingdom of Morocco

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Royal Highness Prince Moulay Rachid, Prince of the Kingdom of Morocco.

His Royal Highness Prince Moulay Rachid, Prince of the Kingdom of Morocco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Royal Highness Prince Moulay Rachid, Prince of the Kingdom of Morocco, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Prince Moulay Rachid (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): His Majesty King Mohammed VI asked me to convey his appreciation and respect, and I am pleased to read my speech at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

First, I would like to warmly congratulate Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, on his election. That election is a mark of esteem for the friendly country of Serbia as much as it is a recognition of the vast diplomatic experience he brings to the presidency.

I also would like to commend Mr. Jeremić's predecessor, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, on his efforts and achievements during the past year.

Similarly, I would like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his untiring action and his keen desire to tackle crises. I applaud his initiatives aimed at enabling the United Nations to rise to the growing challenges facing our world.

Sweeping changes are affecting today's international arena. They include, in particular, a protracted global economic crisis that has various implications and consequences. There are also a growing number of hotbeds of tension, political disputes and armed conflicts, as well as complex global challenges that exceed the capabilities of individual States, such as achieving sustainable development, protecting the environment, ensuring respect for human rights and fighting against the growing scourge of international terrorism and all forms of organized crime.

Given the current changes in the world, we, the States Members of the United Nations, ought to provide the Organization with the means it needs to tackle those challenges. To that end, we must expand the scope of the Organization's actions and revitalize its approach, while preserving its principles and purposes, so as to make it an active player in ensuring effective political governance and an instrument for equitable economic governance.

The Kingdom of Morocco fully backs the decision to give special importance to resolving disputes by peaceful means. My country applauds the General Assembly's decision to make the strengtheing of the foremost principle in the Charter of the United Nations the key objective of the current session.

Achieving international peace and security remains the core historic mission entrusted to the United Nations. The tens of thousands of United Nations peacekeepers serving throughout the world to protect civilians and working to bring about the right conditions for political dialogue between the concerned parties clearly attest to the vital role played by our Organization in that regard.

The Kingdom of Morocco takes pride in being one of the first States to have contributed to peacekeeping operations under the United Nations banner. So far, my country has sent more than 50,000 members of the Royal Armed Forces to places around the world to serve in promoting the lofty objectives of the United Nations. Morocco will remain committed to managing crises and will support efforts to promote preventive diplomacy.

The experience gained by the United Nations in conflict-affected countries points to the importance of securing smooth, systematic transition from peace restoration to peace consolidation. That requires, above all, a prompt response to the pressing needs raised by current developments and threats. Otherwise, the threat of a return to violence and partition will continue to hang over the countries and regions concerned.

During the past year, the African continent has seen a serious deterioration in the situation on the continent, particularly in the Sahel and the Sahara regions, owing to criminal, terrorist and separatist activities, which now threaten the stability of the countries concerned.

Our sister nation, the Republic of Mali, is confronted with a situation that threatens the country and its national unity and territorial integrity. Despite the sincere efforts exerted by countries in the region, including Morocco and the Economic Community of West African States, the contribution of the United Nations is also needed in order to achieve national consensus, overcome the political crisis and confront separatist activities in the north. Only an independent, focused effort on the part of the United Nations can help achieve those objectives. I should like, in that respect, to reiterate to our brothers in Mali Morocco's commitment to continue to provide them with aid and

active support for the success of the political process and the preservation of their country's national unity and territorial integrity.

At the same time, the Kingdom of Morocco lauds the notable progress made in several parts of Africa, especially in the sister nations of Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, towards the promotion of national reconciliation and a return to political normalcy. Moreover, Morocco reiterates its firm commitment to pursuing cooperation and solidarity programmes with various African sister nations, using efficient, dynamic approaches to South-South cooperation for the benefit of African citizens.

The changes witnessed in the Arab region reflect the will of the peoples involved to build democratic societies where human rights are respected and where citizens enjoy equal opportunities and a dignified life. The peoples in the sister nations of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen have ushered in a new era and have made great headway towards a democratic transition, despite a complex and tumultuous political environment, a fact that makes it incumbent upon the international community to provide support and assistance to those countries to deal with the constraints and difficulties that they face.

It is, on the other hand, most regrettable that the Syrian people are each day paying a daily price in blood for their freedom. They yearn for the kind of democratic change that would enable each component of the Syrian population to contribute to achieving the desired change. Morocco, as the only Arab country sitting on the Security Council, has significantly contributed to mobilizing international support for the League of Arab States' initiatives and resolutions. We call for concerted efforts and decisive action to compel the Syrian regime to put an end to the violence. We also call for a political transition process that would allow for the full spectrum of opinions to be heard, the aspirations of the Syrian people to be fulfilled, and Syria's national unity and territorial integrity, as well as for stability in the entire region, to be ensured.

At the same time, it is necessary to raise the financial resources required to meet the needs of refugees in neighbouring countries and those of internally displaced persons, as well as to ease the suffering of our Syrian brothers and put an end to their tragedy. In that regard, Morocco continues to show its solidarity by providing medical services on a daily basis to Syrian refugees in the sisterly Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The rapid developments in the Arab region must not distract us from the fundamental, longstanding challenge of resolving the Palestinian issue. In that regard, the Kingdom of Morocco calls for the mobilization of international support to back the steps taken by the Palestinian National Authority to secure non-member State status. At the same time, my country is of the view that negotiations are the best way for the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate national rights and to set up an independent, fully viable and geographically contiguous Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel, in peace and security. I therefore look forward to seeing the international community change its approach to resolving that crisis by reconsidering its intervention mechanisms and work methods in order to ensure that direct negotiations are resumed very soon and in the best possible circumstances, under the auspices and with the commitment of the influential Powers.

That cannot be achieved if the fait accompli policy is allowed to continue. In that regard and in my capacity as Chair of the Al-Quds Committee, I have strongly condemned the Israeli plan for the Judaization of occupied East Jerusalem, as well as the Israeli plans to wipe out the city's spiritual and cultural identity and change its demographic and urban features. Let me reaffirm, in that regard, that there can be no peace without East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian state.

Steadfast in its belief in the importance and effectiveness of joint regional action, the Kingdom of Morocco has undertaken initiatives and bilateral contacts to inject fresh momentum into the Arab Maghreb Union. Indeed, my country believes that such a strategic, inclusive regional bloc is urgently needed; not only does it meet the legitimate aspirations of our peoples, but it is also necessitated by the security and development challenges facing the five Maghreb States. In a bid to overcome obstacles that might hinder the realization of that Maghreb ambition, the Kingdom of Morocco has contributed in a sincere, dedicated manner to negotiations aimed at finding a realistic, mutually acceptable political solution to the artificial regional dispute over the Moroccan Sahara — a solution that would guarantee the Kingdom's national unity and territorial integrity, allow for reunification to take

place, and respect the characteristics of the region's populations.

Morocco remains committed and willing to negotiate on the basis of the principles established and repeatedly reaffirmed by the Security Council, as well as the autonomy initiative, which the international community has deemed serious, realistic and credible. Morocco will also continue to cooperate constructively with the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, on the basis of the mandate entrusted to it by the Security Council — a mandate that will not change in any way; neither in form nor substance.

I cannot conclude without referring to the need for collective, effective and concerted action against all forms of extremism, hatred, xenophobia, provocation and rejection of those different from us and the undermining of their beliefs, for whatever reason and in whichever form. Given the increase in appalling acts of that kind, often with tragic consequences, I believe national efforts to tackle them must be part of a concerted international strategy that should take into account existing constructive initiatives, build on the mobilization of all United Nations bodies, be based on clear commitments, and encourage law-making and the dissemination of national and regional best practices in that area.

It is up to us as Member States to provide the necessary means and to reiterate our political will to support the Organization and reform its structures and intervention mechanisms. The aim is to enhance its effectiveness in terms of achieving peace and security and promoting cooperation, while enabling it to fulfil its indispensable mission of furthering tolerance and coexistence, for the benefit of all mankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Royal Highness Prince Moulay Rachid, Prince of the Kingdom of Morocco, for the statement he has just made.

His Royal Highness Prince Moulay Rachid, Prince of the Kingdom of Morocco, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Eamon Gilmore, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the State of Ireland.

Mr. Gilmore (Ireland): The primary mission of the United Nations is to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which... has brought untold sorrow to mankind". Those are the words of the Charter of the United Nations: the legacy of our predecessors. Our history tells us that conflict grows in the spaces where human rights are denied; that, where deprivation, inequality and injustice erode human dignity and potential, conflict is the consequence; that war follows hunger, and hunger follows war. That is why the Charter expresses in simple and clear terms our commitment to fundamental human rights. It reaffirms our "faith in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

Words can at times become too familiar, so familiar that their force and impact fade with time. We who gather here each year must remind ourselves what we stand for, reflect honestly on what we have achieved and what we have not achieved, and rededicate ourselves to the ideals set out in our Charter. We must make those lofty words relevant again to the peoples for whom we speak here.

The struggle for human rights is being fought every day in every region of the world. There are too many forgotten places and forgotten causes. We must not turn away from the dark corners where the media spotlight does not shine or from which the media spotlight has long departed. We must speak here for the five-year-old child, without a family, struggling to survive in a refugee camp; for the hungry mother cradling a dying infant at a feeding station; for those who cannot speak publicly in their own lands and who look to us here for the vindication of their basic rights; for those who believe in the words of our Charter and expect us to act on them.

What is happening in Syria is an affront to humanity. Syrian children, Syrian women and Syrian men, young and old, are being slaughtered by their own Government. A national army — the army of a sovereign State and Member of this Organization — is shelling its own people as they queue for bread, and is launching airstrikes on its own cities. We find compelling evidence of wholesale massacres in towns such as Houla, and we see Syrian children trying to make sense of their shattered lives in refugee camps in neighbouring countries. The violence is indiscriminate, and on an appalling scale. And it is not confined to one side.

The people of Syria deserve the full support of the international community for the efforts to bring

about an end to their suffering and to achieve an early political transition. Ireland backs the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab Nations, Lakhdar Brahimi, in his difficult task. The priority must be to achieve an immediate ceasefire and to get a political process under way that will facilitate the transition.

What is needed, above all, is a strong Security Council resolution that will authorize targeted sanctions. It must include a comprehensive arms embargo against all those who are responsible for violating the human rights of the Syrian people. That is what the Syrian people want from us, and what they have a right to expect.

There must also be full accountability for human rights abuses. To prevent further atrocities now and to save lives now, we must make it clear now that atrocities will not go unpunished. That is why Ireland supports the call by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and by Switzerland and others for the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. We are working to build up strong cross-regional support for such a referral.

If the events in the Arab world over the past two years have taught us anything, it is that leaders who deny legitimate demands for greater political and economic freedom and who instead resort to waging war on their own people will inevitably lose the right to rule. The systematic denial of human rights and suppression of democratic liberties has fuelled a profound desire for change. In Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain and elsewhere, Ireland has supported the will of the people, peacefully expressed, to bring about long-overdue democratic reforms.

As world attention focuses on Syria, peace and justice remain elusive elsewhere in the Middle East. The need for a lasting resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is as urgent as ever. Yet a depressing stalemate persists, with no progress towards a comprehensive settlement. Ireland has said on many occasions that the establishment of a Palestinian State, within borders based on those of 1967, is long overdue. We have made clear our hope that Palestine will be formally admitted to the United Nations as a full Member. While that hope remains to be fulfilled, we welcome the announcement by President Abbas of his plans to consult with the membership of the General Assembly on a resolution that, as an interim step towards the achievement of that goal, would accord Palestine non-member State observer status. Ireland will be proud to support a fair and balanced resolution to that end, and we look forward to the forthcoming consultations.

We know of course that such steps will not alter the situation on the ground. Israel must stop expanding settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which only impede the prospect of achieving Israel's own stated desire for a Palestinian State. The peace and security of the people of Israel, to which they are entitled, gain nothing from denying the basic rights of the people of Gaza, who are subjected to an unjust and counterproductive blockade.

There is no alternative to serious negotiations between the two sides aimed at a comprehensive settlement. I would like to see President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu commit themselves to achieving a comprehensive peace agreement within a specified timescale. That will not be easy and will require painful compromises on both sides. But if both leaders are willing to embark on that path they will have the unstinting support of the entire international community, including Ireland.

Peace and security are inextricably linked to development. And development is at the heart of Ireland's foreign policy. We have maintained our official development assistance above 0.5 per cent of gross national product — an important achievement in the face of major economic difficulties — and we remain committed to reaching the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent as soon as we possibly can.

Ireland's aid programme represents a genuine investment by the Irish people in the world we share with the people of developing countries. We focus in particular on the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. We have prioritized investments in education, in health, in good governance, and in the lives and rights of girls and women and of persons living with HIV and AIDS. We have seen remarkable economic progress made in African countries as a result of such investments. But great inequalities still persist.

It is in all our interests as global citizens to stay the course in relation to the Millennium Development Goals and to continue to work together for a sustainable and just world in which States operate on the basis of the rights of all people to participate in and contribute to society and inclusive economies.

Against that background, the reality of hunger persists in our world. The scandal is that we have the tools to tackle that suffering and that terrible waste of human potential. How can people realize their rights and potential if they cannot meet their most basic needs for existence?

No country knows that better than Somalia. Once, Somalia was at the centre of the world's attention. But the media spotlight moved on, and the people of Somalia have faced a long struggle to emerge from war, famine and instability. Today, more than two million Somalis still need our help. On the last Sunday of July 2012, I visited Mogadishu. Amidst the grinding poverty and the misery of insecurity, I saw genuine signs of hope and opportunity. Schools, homes, shops and businesses are being rebuilt and reopened, and people are returning from exile. Increased international engagement has been essential. Real progress is also being achieved in Somalia's transition to democracy, with impressive engagement by Somali traditional and political leaders. We must support them.

I pledge today that Ireland will not turn away from Somalia or from humanitarian emergencies elsewhere in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and across the globe. We will work with our partners to highlight forgotten crises and the needs of fragile States, as well as to forge a more coherent and effective international approach towards humanitarian action and development policy.

Ireland has made the fight against hunger and undernourishment the key priority of its development policy. We have delivered on our commitment to direct 20 per cent of our aid budget to that priority. With our partners, we have worked closely with the Secretary-General to build and support the Scaling Up Nutrition movement. But we must do more. Collectively, we must act now to recognize the systemic linkages between recurring food price crises, humanitarian emergencies, chronic undernourishment and the effects of climate change.

There is nothing that connects us more across borders, across oceans and across generations than our mutual dependence on the planet that we share. Climate change is not something happening in a far-off land or in a distant future. It is happening now and it is happening fast. It is not for another generation to solve. It is for us to take responsibility, to strive to achieve climate justice, and to act.

A deep attachment to the safeguarding of human rights has been at the heart of Ireland's foreign policy since the foundation of our State. Ireland's commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights has been shaped by our own history. As a small island nation that has experienced the impact of colonialism, civil war and conflict, we learned the hard way that human rights can never be taken for granted.

From the earliest days of our United Nations membership, we pioneered the promotion of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We also paid close attention to decolonization and the struggle against apartheid. Today, we make substantial contributions to United Nations development agencies and funds and are active participants in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Thousands of Irishmen and Irishwomen have served in United Nations peacekeeping forces, and our people are intensely proud of that contribution to the ideals of the United Nations.

Ireland also plays an active role in the work being done in the United Nations framework to protect and promote human rights. We are proud that our former President, Mary Robinson, served with distinction as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from 1997 to 2002. When the Human Rights Council was first established in 2006, Ireland declared that it would seek election to that body in 2012. That is the first occasion on which we have sought election to the Council.

We are committed to a robust and effective Human Rights Council. We want to see a principled Council that provides real leadership in that critical area. We also value and support the full participation of small States in the work of the Council. The Universal Periodic Review process has opened up an important space for national dialogue on human rights. Ireland engaged constructively and self-critically in its own review. We are also firmly committed to a strengthened United Nations treaty monitoring body system and have actively contributed to efforts to reinforce that system.

Threats to human rights worldwide are proliferating steadily, whether from widespread poverty and hunger, repressive systems of governance, religious intolerance, gender-based violence or other sources. If Ireland is elected to the Human Rights Council in November, we will serve the cause of international human rights protection as an active and committed member of the Council.

The United Nations was founded on the principle that diplomatic engagement and dialogue between nations are essential to peace and human development. Attacks on diplomatic missions, such as we saw recently in Benghazi, are attacks on that principle. They are never acceptable and must be condemned by the international community.

Ireland is currently chairing the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). That has enabled us to make a contribution to the search for agreement across the full range of the OSCE's activities. We have drawn on our own experience in building peace in Northern Ireland to contribute to the work of the OSCE, which seeks to find peaceful settlements to protracted conflicts. I am hopeful that by the end of our term in office we will have been able to make progress in some key areas, including in the so-called human dimension of the OSCE and on some conflict issues.

We have used our chairmanship to prioritize Internet freedom, reflecting the increasing importance of the Internet as a platform for the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms. A major conference in Dublin last June focused on how human rights and fundamental freedoms do not change with new technologies, but extend seamlessly into the digital age. We look forward to assuming the presidency of the European Union Council of Ministers in the first half of next year. We will bring to that role the same energy and commitment that we have devoted to discharging our OSCE responsibilities.

A distinguished Irish politician and lawyer of the late eighteenth century, John Philpot Curran, once remarked that "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance". If we are to live up to the aspirations of the Charter of the United Nations, we must also assume the burden of eternal vigilance. The daily challenges to human rights are painfully obvious. Our response must be clear and unrelenting. In the words of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the promotion and protection of human rights is "the first responsibility" of Governments. We cannot and must not shy from that responsibility.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Michael Spindelegger, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria.

Mr. Spindelegger (Austria): The events of recent months have illustrated once again the importance of the United Nations as a multilateral forum for addressing today's crises and challenges. The conflicts in Syria and Mali and the ongoing reform processes in many parts of the Arab world demonstrate that we can face such challenges only through concerted action.

In Syria, thousands have lost their lives in their struggle for freedom and reform owing to crimes committed by a regime that denies them every basic human right in order to stay in power. Austria condemns the systematic human rights violations and bloodshed in Syria in the strongest possible terms. The more than 27,000 victims and some 2.5 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance are a stark reminder for each and every one of us that it is high time for the United Nations to finally act. The Security Council, in particular, must assume its responsibilities in relation to the ever-worsening situation in the country. Violence has to stop immediately, and both sides have to engage in a meaningful dialogue facilitated by Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi. There will be no solution unless President Al-Assad steps aside and gives way to the forces of reason and reconciliation.

Austria continues to fully support the ongoing transition processes in the Arab world. We welcome the efforts undertaken so far to lay the foundations for more open, inclusive and prosperous societies. We encourage the newly empowered authorities to fulfil their mandate for democratic change responsibly. The aspirations of the people for dignity and freedom must be satisfied, thereby contributing to peace and stability in the region.

In that context, let me reiterate my strongest condemnation of the recent attacks on diplomatic missions and personnel, especially the murder of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three of his colleagues in Benghazi. Violence is never an acceptable response to the exercise of the fundamental right of freedom of speech. To attack an Embassy and its personnel is not only contrary to international law but an attack on the very ideals that the United Nations stands for, namely, the peaceful cooperation of Member States to build a better future together.

The still unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to gravely destabilize the Middle East. The terms of a negotiated and sustainable solution — two States with secure and mutually recognized borders — have been discussed over and over again and are broadly supported by the people and

the international community, and yet we experienced a complete lack of progress in the last year. We therefore call on the leadership on both sides to finally assume their responsibilities and enable a lasting peace and security to be established for their children and future generations.

The situation in Mali also continues to be a matter of grave concern. Austria has been dismayed by the political turmoil, with its disastrous effects on the Malian population. Growing insecurity and the continued deterioration of the humanitarian and human rights situation call for concerted action. The high-level meeting held on Wednesday was an important signal that we are moving in that direction. We fully support the efforts by the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union to try to find, together with the United Nations, a lasting political solution to the crisis in Mali and the Sahel region as a whole. Austria will advocate for increased support from the European Union to contribute to that end.

In the light of the crises and challenges the international community is facing, Austria welcomes President Jeremić's timely choice of theme to highlight the peaceful settlement of disputes in this year's general debate. Prevention is always better — and cheaper — than a cure. The progress made in Sierra Leone, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Myanmar testifies how successful sustainable mediation efforts can be.

The peaceful settlement of disputes can be achieved only through open dialogue, based on mutual respect. Austria has a long-standing tradition of promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue. We are proud to host the fifth Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations in Vienna. It will take place on 27 and 28 February 2013, under the title "Responsible Leadership in Diversity and Dialogue". Austria highly values the contribution of youth as a transformative force. Therefore, the day before the Global Forum will be dedicated to the Alliance of Civilizations youth event in order to benefit from their views.

In that context, I am also pleased to inform that the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue will be inaugurated on 26 November in Vienna. The Centre, a joint initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Spain and the Republic of Austria, will certainly offer a significant contribution to the promotion of dialogue.

We need to be clear that sustainable peace and development go hand in hand with respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These are universal values that no human being should be denied. We must not falter until this goal is achieved. In 2011, Austria was elected to the Human Rights Council. We fully support the Council and its mechanisms, especially the universal periodic review. The Council is best placed to react swiftly in case of human rights emergencies. Its special sessions on Syria and Libya illustrated that the international community will not turn a blind eye on gross human rights violations and indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population. Human rights abuses must not go unpunished. Violations must be thoroughly investigated and perpetrators must be held accountable before credible judicial institutions, including the International Criminal Court.

Our membership of the Human Rights Council is an opportunity to continue working on the key priorities that Austria pursued during its Security Council membership in 2009 and 2010: the protection of civilians, the safety of journalists, the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the freedom of religion and belief, and the protection of children from violence and abuse.

The High-level Meeting of 24 September was an important opportunity to renew our commitment to the rule of law at the national and international levels. It now needs an adequate follow-up. As chair of the Group of Friends of the Rule of Law, Austria will provide concrete proposals for the upcoming report of the Secretary-General.

The various United Nations headquarters in Vienna are a hub for promoting peace and security. The work of the International Atomic Energy Agency is more relevant than ever. I am pleased that we can now also draw on additional services from the new office of the Office for Disarmament Affairs established in Vienna.

Austria is deeply concerned about programmes for weapons of mass destruction and proliferation activities in several regions of the world. The creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is more urgent than ever. In that respect, let me underline that Iran must finally give credible evidence for the peaceful nature of its nuclear programmeme and engage in earnest in the talks with the European Union three plus one group. The continued inability to even initiate substantive

multilateral disarmament negotiations is unacceptable. Austria is committed to working with other interested States to move forward on that crucial issue. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his continued support in that matter.

We need to move beyond a strictly military security approach that originates from the Cold War period. It is time to change the discourse on nuclear weapons. Any use of nuclear weapons would be devastating for the whole world in its humanitarian and environmental effects. In the twenty-first century, such an existential threat to humankind can no longer be handled exclusively by a few States as a national security matter.

Austria is committed to strengthening and further developing international law and a humanitarian approach to advance the global disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. A lot has been achieved in the past two decades, as evidenced by the successful conclusions of the conventions to ban anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. We hope that similar progress can be achieved on the arms trade treaty in the coming months. Other Member States should join the emerging consensus on regulating the trade in arms in a comprehensive manner.

Vienna and its United Nations headquarters also serve as a platform for the discussion on sustainable development. We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to establish an implementation office for his Sustainable Energy for All initiative. That will help to advance this important agenda. Universal access to energy and the improvement of energy efficiency, along with a higher share of renewable energy, are goals that will help bring electricity to the billion and a half people worldwide lacking access. Equally, it will help control greenhouse gas emissions and global warming, which threaten the very existence of many Member States.

This year's United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development marked the beginning of a new era, renewing the prospects for future generations via the sustainable development goals, as tailored to the needs of different countries or groups of States and regions. While implementing those new global goals, we should not cease our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015.

Austria remains fully committed to an effective multilateral system. Therefore we will support the efforts of the President of the Assembly and of the Secretary-General to further increase the effectiveness of our Organization in order to better enable us to face the challenges of our time.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Samuel Santos López, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Santos López (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): As I address the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, I would like first of all to convey the warm greetings and solidarity of the people of Nicaragua and its Government of national reconciliation and unity, led by Comrade President Comandante Daniel Ortega Saavedra, who wishes us success in our work.

The changes now taking place in science, economy, geopolitics, technology, ecology and culture are truly revolutions in the life of all human societies around the world, but they raise doubts about the effectiveness of international organizations in conducting global affairs. The situation in the world today proves that when governance is conceived and conducted from the perspective of global capitalism — savage, as it was called by His Holiness Pope John Paul II — instead of becoming a factor for positive transformation, as we were led to believe it would, it can lead us to the edge of civilization.

The vertiginous development of speculative venture capital in developed countries has reduced the role of the State in public affairs. The market imposes itself in all areas — the economy, politics, culture, society, individuals and the mass media — thus strengthening the influence of the interests of giant corporations involved in food production, communications, medicine and the military-industrial complex. They are the real power in decisions having a global impact; their decisions determine the course of many important events related to the economy and to peace. That is totally contrary to the idea that gave rise to our Organization. That situation is aggravated by the growing sense that, increasingly, well-being and world power are completely in the hands of market and finance elites, that the people's standards of living are dramatically crumbling and that confidence in the capacity of all Governments to solve the most pressing problems is decreasing at an accelerating pace.

Mr. Balé (Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The impact of the economic and financial crisis on the centres of power of global capitalism is provoking

political and social changes with great international repercussions. The United States and European countries, paradigms of that egotistical model, are at a loss to find solutions to their structural problems. They drag their citizens and the world into unemployment, social insecurity and greater poverty. Thus the exclusive nature of the privatization of the State and its subjection to market forces, speculation and financial fraud becomes clear, demonstrating the urgent need for equitable distribution of wealth worldwide.

Many outstanding thinkers describe the scenario as a struggle between the market and the State. However, the paradox is that the very State that wanted to find the paradigm for development in the greater comfort of its citizens is one that today, without political scruples or ethics, develops a new neoliberal programme, disguised as necessary adjustments to save the economy and defend the citizens. That reveals that in developed countries, the economy, the market and political power are the same thing. In them, the State has evolved only to merge into one programme the interests of speculative financial capital, of large global corporations and industries and of the military-industrial complex. We are certain that the nature of these adjustments is permanent, and that it is a new economic agenda that will direct the greatest concentration of power to the highest global level in the quest to dictate the path of a new capitalist model that in all spheres of life is ever more concentrated.

The world of 1945, after the Second World War, gave rise to all the institutions that constitute global governance, beginning with our Organization. That world no longer exists. Thus today as never before it is imperative that we re-establish a philosophy of firm and lasting world peace and of economic development for the benefit of all the peoples of the world — that is, the philosophy that inspired the founders of the United Nations system, the philosophy of global governability and management.

In that connection, we reiterate the urgency of making progress in the reform of the United Nations system, or rather in its reinvention. Nicaraguans have the honour of having taken the initiative in this matter. Our brother, the former Foreign Minister of Nicaragua and President of the the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, together with President Daniel Ortega Saavedra and other great present-day thinkers, have taken on the task of developing a plan for the reinvention of the United Nations system. We say "reinvent" because the present Organization no longer permits reforms; those that have been proposed so far have not made progress, due the policy of some permanent members of the Security Council. In the name of the people of Nicaragua, I invite all to strongly push for that proposal, in order to make a reality of a new Charter of the United Nations that guarantees democratization of the Organization.

Peace is a supreme value and a condition in which human activity can develop in a stable manner beneficial for all. However, some developments establish a dangerous path.

We consider the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba a flagrant violation of international law and the most basic norms of peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, today it is claimed that that blockade is based on the arbitrary, groundless and unilateral inclusion of that fraternal country in a list of States sponsoring international terrorism. We demand the immediate and unconditional end of that crime against humanity, which constitutes an affront to the conscience of our peoples. We also demand the immediate and unconditional release of the five Cuban patriots who are unjustly kept in prison in the United States of America.

We demand respect for the sovereignty and independence of the fraternal Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which faces a wave of conspiratorial actions seeking to destabilize and destroy the democratic plan of the Bolivarian Revolution and the popular interests, thus undermining the enormous social and economic gains obtained by the Venezuelan people through great effort and courage, with the distinguished leadership of President Hugo Chávez Frias.

The peace process in Colombia should be fully supported in order for the people to start on a path of true social progress.

International law should be given unrestricted support as regards the inviolability of Ecuador's diplomatic Mission in the United Kingdom. We also reaffirm our support of Argentina's sovereign rights over the Malvinas Islands and the right of Puerto Rico to obtain its full independence.

Bearing in mind the information disseminated daily by the world's main communication media, it has escaped no one's attention that there is a risk of widespread war in the Middle East. The situation in

Syria is unacceptable. We strongly condemn the acts of terrorism that have cost the lives of high-level officials of President Bashar Al-Assad's Government and of the population of Syria. Nicaragua recalls that it is a form of aggression that was already condemned by the International Court of Justice in 1986 in the case of *The Republic of Nicaragua v. The United States of America*. It is evident that the mediation promoted by the United Nations is going nowhere, simply because it is being blocked by the members of NATO and their allies with interests in the region.

A peaceful solution with regard to the Islamic Republic of Iran should be promoted. We need to resolve without delay the aspirations of the Palestinian people by supporting the peace negotiations and their legitimate right to their own State and to be part of the United Nations. We strongly condemn the terrorist acts in Benghazi, Libya, on 11 September, in which United States Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other United States citizens lost their lives, just as we condemn any act of terrorism that is an assault on civilization, culture, religion and justice anywhere in the world.

We welcome the recent positive developments with regard to the relationship between China/Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. We have to address the legitimate aspirations of Taiwan to participate more broadly in all United Nations specialized agencies and organs.

We reaffirm our commitment to total and complete disarmament and international security. A world free of nuclear arms and weapons of mass destruction is indispensable.

On a different matter, Central America is a transit zone for the drugs produced in the South and that find in the North, in the United States, their largest consumer market and the largest money-laundering operation for the traffic in drugs. Central America has expressed the need for destination countries to eradicate drug trafficking and consumption within their borders, using all the technology and resources at their disposal. Likewise, we have agreed to demand economic support for all of Central America in its constant struggle against organized crime and drug trafficking. However, the slow pace or lack of commitment to that issue does irreparable damage, especially to the peoples of Mesoamerica, who have to allocate enormous resources for the prohibition and interception of drugs, consequently delaying our social investments.

In that scenario, which is not very encouraging and in which we are far from being triumphant, Latin America and the Caribbean are making great strides in strengthening their economic, political, social and cultural integration and unity through the Central American Integration System, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. Our regional process of integration and unity through the Central American Integration System advances consistently and on solid ground, based on the common objectives that further the peace and economic and social development of Central Americans. Our model for integration and unity is also evident in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, which has a component of fair trade, complementarity, cooperation and solidarity among its members. Another expression of this process is the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which was established in 2011 and is convincing proof of our integrationist calling.

The principles and purposes of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries constitute a broad common platform, which has world reach and is contributing to the development of a multipolar world and to the strengthening of peace and international security. In that context, our Government of national reconciliation and unity, presided over by Comandante Daniel Ortega Saavedra, and our people are achieving important results in the struggle against poverty. That strengthens the process of restoring rights, which translates into more health, better education, more productive and service-oriented infrastructure, and a higher living standard for all our citizens.

Very soon we will have transformed our energy matrix, using sources of renewable energy, so that by 2017, 94 per cent of energy consumed will be renewable energy. We have decided to take the necessary steps for the construction of the great inter-ocean canal through Nicaragua for ships weighing more than 250,000 tons.

Climate change and all its related effects constitute one of the most formidable challenges of our time. The developed countries should comply with their legally binding environmental commitments. The valuable natural resources of our planet must not be privatized in favour of a few.

Furthermore, in times of crisis, we can see that we run the risk of not reaching all of the Millennium Development Goals that we proposed to reach by 2015. We cannot allow that to happen. The commitments of the developed countries to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance must be honoured.

Another grave problem is that of food insecurity. The food crisis is a serious obstacle in the struggle against poverty and hunger. We must work together to universally restore that right to the peoples. Our societies are struggling with the urgency of satisfying their most basic needs, with equitable profits from the benefits of development and with the importance of developing democracies based on representation and direct participation of the citizens. That is a road whose specificities must be respected without interference of any kind.

Dangers lurk and have resulted in events that do not contribute to our political stability. Coups d'état, such as those attempted in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador or those carried out in Honduras and Paraguay, must be condemned and rejected, regardless of how they are executed or attempted. We cannot allow coups to once again become entrenched as methods for a political solution to conflicts, whether within any country or between States.

We cannot ignore that the process of concentration of global power has repercussions in the political and social systems governing our societies. The final blow is intended to destroy or break up popular social movements in order to eliminate States and Governments that do not align themselves with the neoliberal model. Therefore, in the progressive or revolutionary national projects manifested through the nation States of our Latin and Caribbean America, our citizens, our peoples, are called to resist and to raise banners of peace, dignity, identity and national sovereignty.

We are constructing a new world governance with our work to transform international institutions. We are strengthening a new world governance by incorporating more and more citizens in the work of building this new world to which we aspire. The present global order and its institutions are at an impasse. The only headway being made is through the new effort I am describing to deeply transform the economy, politics, society and culture. That effort alone will endure as the fruit of the best of our human nature and our history. The other world, the world that refuses change, the world of war and human misery, the world of the apocalypse being announced on television as a novelty, will fail. The hope and the future for which we struggle will grow and shine on its remains.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): For over a year and a half, the situation in the Middle East and North Africa has been the nerve centre of global politics. The deep changes that have swept over the region intertwine with the key problems of modern international relations and require everyone to take a comprehensive approach and to reject simplistic and ideology-driven patterns and double standards.

Russia has consistently supported peoples in their aspiration to determine their destiny and to pave the way to more effective models of public governance. We believe it is particularly important to carry out those transformations in a non-violent way and without outside interference. We strongly believe that all members of the international community should be interested in making the Middle East-North Africa region peaceful, stable, democratic and free from domestic and inter-State conflicts. So far, however, there has been no progress in reaching unanimity in the efforts of outside players to create conditions for achieving that goal.

Of particular concern is the deepening internal conflict in Syria. We have consistently called for consolidated efforts by the international community to compel the Government and its opponents to immediately cease the violence, come to the negotiating table and work out a compromise on the content and pace of reforms that would satisfy all Syrians and ensure the safety and rights of all ethnic and religious groups. That was the substance of the consensus recorded in the final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex), agreed upon in Geneva as a follow-up to the Kofi Annan plan.

We call upon all members of the Action Group to fully abide by the commitments we all took on in Geneva. That is the fastest way to stop the loss of human life in Syria. We proposed a Security Council resolution endorsing the Geneva communiqué as the basis for negotiations at the beginning of the transitional period,

but that proposal was blocked. Those who oppose the implementation of the Geneva communiqué bear an onerous responsibility. They insist on a ceasefire by the Government alone and encourage the opposition to intensify hostilities, in fact pushing Syria even deeper into the abyss of bloody internecine strife. The militarization of the conflict continues, with calls for open intervention.

Extremist organizations including Al-Qaida have become more active in Syria. They perpetrate terrorist attacks against innocent civilians and civil infrastructure. The number of war crimes is growing, on the part of both Government forces and the opposition, as recorded in the recent report of the Human Rights Council's commission of inquiry (A/HRC/21/50).

Russia resolutely condemns any violence, wherever it comes from, and is convinced that there is still an opportunity to undertake collective action. Practical steps to overcome the crisis need to begin with a comprehensive ceasefire, the release of prisoners and hostages and the provision of additional humanitarian aid. That would create the conditions to start an inter-Syrian dialogue. We hope that Lakhdar Brahimi, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, will be able to bring his vast experience to bear on moving towards an agreement on such arrangements, with the support of the international community. Russia will provide its full support to promote the success of his mission.

The changes taking place in the Middle East should not marginalize the Palestinian problem. The achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting Arab-Israeli settlement, which should lead, among other results, to the establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, coexisting in peace and security with Israel, would be a major contribution to the normalization of the overall regional situation. The Arab Peace Initiative fully retains its relevance, and we support the efforts of the League of Arab States to move it forward.

I also wish to stress the importance of implementing the decision on convening in 2012 a conference on establishing in the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery (see NPT/CONF/2010/50 (Vol.I)). It is clearly necessary to ensure the participation in the conference of all States in the region, and they should agree on key arrangements among themselves. In that matter, the League of Arab States should play an important role.

On the whole, we support closer ties between the United Nations and regional entities. I would note that in our part of the world today a memorandum on cooperation was signed between the secretariat of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. I am convinced that it will increase the efficiency of common efforts to ensure stability and security.

All our actions should be founded solidly on the United Nations Charter, which makes no provision for the right to change regimes. It is unacceptable to impose a political system on a country and its people. Our position was clearly stated by President Vladimir Putin speaking at the Kremlin on 26 September. The entire sequence of events in the Arab world and other regions proves the futility of any such policy, which can lead to dangerous interethnic and interreligious clashes in international relations.

We believe it is an obligation of all States to protect from provocations and blasphemy the religious feelings of people of any religious affiliation. At the same time, of course, there can be no justification for acts of terror, regardless of where they are committed, be they in Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen or anywhere else. Attacks against diplomats or United Nations personnel are absolutely unacceptable.

In general, we are convinced that today, when the world is going through a transition period characterized by instability in the spheres of the economy, politics and inter-civilizational relations, it is particularly important for United Nations Member States to be able to rely on accepted rules of conduct and to agree on a joint response to the threats to global stability. We should not allow irresponsible actions dictated by expedient interests to shatter the system of international law. The world order is threatened by arbitrary interpretation of such essential principles as the non-use or threat of force, the peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their domestic affairs.

Those are the key principles of the United Nations Charter, which confers the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security on the Security Council. In advancing the reform of the United Nations, it is essential to preserve the capacity of the Security Council to perform those functions. Their

erosion would deprive the international community of an essential mechanism for developing joint approaches to the settlement of crisis situations.

It is appropriate to mention the compulsory instruments at the disposal of the United Nations. Under the United Nations Charter the imposition of sanctions falls exclusively under the jurisdiction of the Security Council. Decisions must be made on a collegial basis, with the understanding that sanctions should not lead to isolation of the State targeted for sanctions, but rather encourage it to engage in a dialogue to remove questions that the Member States may have. It is essential that sanctions should be well-measured and that they not cause any suffering to the population. In the past the Security Council has discussed the issue of the humanitarian limits of sanctions, but somehow the discussions have faded away. We believe it is important to resume them.

Another issue that needs to be discussed in the Security Council is the consequences of unilateral sanctions imposed by a State or a group of States sidestepping the United Nations to advance their political goals. We have no doubt that such sanctions, especially when they are applied extraterritorially, weaken the unity of the international community and undermine the effectiveness of its efforts. For many years, the commercial, economic and financial restrictions imposed by the United States on Cuba have remained an illustration of the negative impact of unilateral sanctions. Russia, together with the overwhelming majority of members of the international community, calls for the swift lifting of the blockade, which is a relic of the Cold War.

Special attention should be given to the practical enforcement of Security Council decisions regarding sanctions against non-State actors and illegal cross-border formations. In general, the events of recent years have clearly shown that unilateral action which violates international law and circumvents or distorts the decisions of the Security Council does no good.

Of course, the legal norms of international affairs will be further adjusted as necessary. But these transformations should be treated with the greatest sense of responsibility and full consciousness of the serious risks involved. Consensus should be the sole route to their adoption. Violations of international law should not be portrayed as some sort of creative development.

All of this is related to the debate regarding the concept of the so-called responsibility to protect. Further discussion of this concept should be held on the basis of the approach agreed on at the 2005 World Summit, which reaffirmed the need to observe the principles of the Charter of the United Nations when responding to conflicts within States. The protection of civilians is an issue far too serious to be exploited to achieve political goals. The ambiguity of the so-called responsibility-to-protect concept can be better understood in light of initiatives formulated by Brazil and several other States to move towards consensus.

Let us not forget that the founders of the United Nations, in their wisdom, agreed upon and endorsed a Charter that enshrined principles for the regulation of a multipolar world order. Now that the abnormal bipolar period of the Cold War is over, and now that it has become clear to all that there is no place for monopolarity in the modern world and international affairs can only be polycentric, we have a unique chance to fully implement the original potential of that Charter.

This is a difficult challenge. International relations are clearly experiencing a lack of credibility. We regard this as the main obstacle to practical progress towards the establishment of universal foundations for equal and indivisible security, whether in the Euro-Atlantic area, Asia-Pacific region or other parts of the world. Such a state of affairs clearly contradicts the concept of collective security embodied in the Charter and the deep interdependence of the modern world, where most challenges and threats are common to us all and have a cross-border dimension.

Strengthening confidence and collective principles in international affairs, with the emphasis on negotiating the pursuit of compromise solutions, would help substantially reduce the level of instability and move forward in the settlement of crisis situations, not only in the Middle East, but also with respect to Iran, Afghanistan, the Korean peninsula and other situations throughout the world.

The final goal of the efforts to settle a conflict is to ensure the right to life and other fundamental human rights, be they political, economic or social. The events of recent years confirm that, without lasting peace and sustainable development, it is impossible to ensure human rights. In turn, the protection of human rights should contribute to security and development, rather

than serve as a pretext for illegal interference in the domestic affairs of States.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone is entitled to an international order in which their rights can be fully realized. Those who use military force and sanctions, bypassing the Charter, engage in illicit supplies of arms, or provide cover for terrorists grossly violate this right.

Russia stands for the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and respect for the traditional values on which human civilization is based and where all world religions converge. This is a moral foundation of modern society. It is the cement that bonds together nations and peoples. In recent years, these values have been put to the test by displays of immorality, extremism and racial intolerance. Of similar concern are the even more assertive actions of those who, citing freedom of speech, condone the glorification of the Nazis and their accomplices and desecrate the memory of the victims of the Second World War and the victors of fascism. Such actions are incompatible with the obligations of States under the Charter of the United Nations.

Let me recall that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights directly prohibits the propaganda of war and incitement of national and religious discord. This means that freedom of speech and assembly cannot be used to justify the promotion of Nazi or other radical or extremist views, in violation of the basic principles and norms of international law.

Yesterday, the Human Rights Council endorsed a resolution proposed by Russia on the interrelation of human rights and traditional values. It is regrettable that a number of Western States voted against this document, which is especially relevant today.

Progress towards genuine partnership in international relations is possible only on the basis of equality and mutual respect. The course of events in the world leaves no alternative for anyone but to join efforts in order to build a stable, equitable and democratic international system. It would be possible to resist this objective trend and try to preserve the old order for some time, but such resistance would cost yet more lives, suffering and destruction. Let us display our vision and, instead of looking back at the history of previous centuries, take the side of the events unfolding before us today, and answer the call for strong collective statesmanship.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Sisoulith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Vuk Jeremić upon his election to serve as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. It is my firm belief that, with his extensive experience and constructive initiatives, he will guide the Assembly towards achieving its objectives while serving the common interests of all its members.

May I also take this opportunity to extend my profound congratulations to Mr. Nassir Al Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, on the successful discharge of his duties.

Likewise, I would like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for tirelessly leading United Nations efforts to meet its obligations and achieve its objectives, as well as working to improve the overall working methods of the United Nations.

Over the past two years, the international community has encountered complex challenges in all areas. Regional political complexity and unrest, especially in the Middle East, seem unlikely to be resolved any time soon. The use of violence in any form, as seen in attacks on diplomatic compounds in Syria, is unacceptable to us. In addition, the global economic and financial crisis affecting all parts of the world has reached an alarming point, causing great concern for all nations, and even for the European Union — a major economic force.

Such crises have challenged the capacity and credibility of the existing global governance mechanisms designed by the international community to address global challenges. This is a clear indication that our joint efforts and actions have not yet produced tangible outcomes.

Negotiations on climate change have shown no progress, although the Kyoto Protocol is expiring this year. Efforts to formulate an international instrument to govern arms trade and prevent illegal trading, which started some years ago, have also failed. There has also been little commitment on the part of the developed countries to help the most vulnerable groups

of countries: the least developed countries (LDCs), the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and the small island developing States.

In the light of the current situation, it is more crucial than ever to strengthen the United Nations, the only universal Organization, in order to increase its effectiveness in addressing important global issues. To that end, all Member States should strive to extend their full support and cooperation to revitalize the United Nations, finding a harmonious balance between national and international interests in order to address the enormous global challenges in a timely and effective manner.

In the current context, regional organizations have played an increasingly important role in addressing the global issues. In that connection, more and more countries in the world now attach greater importance to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ever-expanding ASEAN-initiated cooperation frameworks. ASEAN is entering a crucial stage in implementing its leaders' commitment to establishing an ASEAN community comprised of three pillars — a political-security community, an economic community and a social-cultural community — by 2015. I firmly believe that, by utilizing its own resources combined with external support, especially from its dialogue partners, ASEAN will be able to realize its ultimate goal of becoming a community that is politically stable, economically integrated and socially and culturally harmonious, thus contributing to the cause of peace and prosperity in the region and the world at large.

As a member of the international community, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has done its utmost to fulfil its international obligations by pursuing a policy of cooperation with other countries based on the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and respect for the principles of national independence, sovereignty and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, thus building an international environment conducive to national development.

Over the past year, despite numerous challenges, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has continued to enjoy political stability and social order. There has been good progress in developing the national economy. That has laid a solid foundation for attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and created conditions conducive to the country's graduation from least developed country status by 2020.

Despite those achievements, the Lao People's Democratic Republic continues to face numerous challenges and constraints. In addition to problems resulting from the global and regional economic crises, natural calamities and the remnants of war, such as unexploded ordnance, continue to harm people's lives and pose major obstacles to national social and economic development, including the attainment of the MDGs. In that regard, we call upon all countries to become party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions with a view to fully banning the use of such weapons.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic feels honoured to be entrusted with hosting the 9th Asia-Europe Summit Meeting, which will be held on 5 and 6 November in Vientiane, the capital of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. That will provide a great opportunity for the leaders of Asia and Europe to discuss and exchange their views on global issues of mutual interest.

The international community wishes to see the restoration of peace and stability in the Middle East. The conflict between Israel and Palestine will not be resolved without the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions supporting the establishment of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace. The Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its support for the membership of Palestine to the United Nations.

The economic, financial and trade embargo imposed on the Republic of Cuba has long caused considerable hardship to the standard of living of the Cuban people. That embargo must be unconditionally and immediately lifted.

Owing to their geographical locations, the landlocked developing countries are among the most vulnerable Members of the United Nations. The special challenges and major development obstacles they face are the result of their great distance from world markets and high transit transport costs, which impede their national sustainable development efforts. Each year, the landlocked countries bear a heavy financial burden in the effort to improve their transit transport infrastructure network in order to ensure that their export products, which constitute a crucial part of their national income, have better access to world markets. Those problems are compounded when their national economies are affected by financial or social crises, natural disasters and climate change, inter alia. In addition, 50 per

cent of the LLDCs are also LDCs. I therefore urge the international community to devote greater attention and provide assistance to that vulnerable group of countries through full implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, as well as to play an active part in the 10-year review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, to be held in 2014.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic reiterates once again its firm commitment and determination to continue working closely with the international community to build a peaceful world under a just and more democratic new order, based on cooperation with all countries in tackling the various global challenges facing us. I am convinced that only through firm determination will we be able to achieve the immediate and long-term development objectives and ensure that the world is secure, peaceful and prosperous.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Kim Sung-hwan, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Sung-hwan (Republic of Korea): Allow me at the outset to express my sincere congratulations to Mr. Vuk Jeremić on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. I have every confidence that under his able leadership this session will be crowned with great success.

Humankind continues to advance, drawing on our collective wisdom to address challenges throughout human history. Although new global challenges to mankind such as climate change, poverty and disease, underdevelopment, terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are now testing the international community, I have no doubt that we will overcome those challenges on our future path.

The United Nations, the symbol of our collective wisdom, should take greater responsibility in coping with the challenges. I note with great satisfaction that the United Nations is becoming a more accountable and trusted international Organization under the prominent leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. In that regard, I recognize and support the Secretary-General's five-year Action Agenda, which I believe will guide us in addressing current world challenges and onward towards the future we are aiming for.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in June in Rio de Janeiro, represented a critical step forward towards ushering in the world we hope for. The outcome document, entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), marks a substantial advancement for sustainable development. The task before us now is to capitalize on our achievements thus far and exert even greater effort on follow-up actions such as developing sustainable development goals, strengthening the institutional framework and mobilizing finance.

As part of such endeavours, the Republic of Korea established the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI). Sixteen countries signed the agreement to establish the GGGI on the margins of the Rio+20 meeting, and the Institute will be launched as an international organization starting in October. The GGGI will engage in a range of activities for disseminating the green growth paradigm, in which the economy and the environment form a virtuous cycle. Moreover, the Korean Government is prepared to step up its contribution to international efforts to achieve a sustainable future by hosting the secretariat of the Green Climate Fund. The Republic of Korea stands ready to render wholehearted support for the successful launch and stable operation of the Fund.

The Republic of Korea is keen on contributing to the balanced and harmonious development of the international community and is fully cooperating in such efforts in the context of the United Nations. The Korean Government continues to increase its official development assistance to help achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The Republic of Korea underscored the importance of inclusive growth and development partnership at the 2010 Seoul Summit of the Group of Twenty and the Fourth High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan in 2011. In June, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation was launched for the implementation of the Busan commitments. The Busan Forum and the launch of the Global Partnership will mark a turning point for international development cooperation by broadening our perspective from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness.

Our own experience has taught us that investment in education is at the heart of effective development. In that vein, we are confident that the Education First initiative of the Secretary-General will, indeed, provide a solid foundation for achieving the international development goals. The Korean Government extends its strong support for the initiative.

The Republic of Korea is also taking an active part in the discussions on shaping the post-2015 development framework. We fully recognize the importance of a comprehensive approach that takes into account the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

The aspiration for human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic values is the primary driving force for the advancement of humanity. Today, many countries have been striving to advocate human rights in tandem with democracy. The United Nations, as the epicentre of the international community's efforts to promote and protect human rights, has provided timely assistance to such countries.

Recently, we witnessed the strong desire of people in the Middle East and North Africa to realize their aspirations for democracy and respect for human rights. The recent positive developments in Myanmar are also well worth noting in that regard. However, while those changes are still unfolding, enormous challenges and difficulties still lie ahead. In Syria, a great number of civilians have been killed and gross violations of human rights have been witnessed. With high hopes towards the efforts of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, the Korean Government will stand by the Syrian people through this time of suffering together with the international community.

The Korean Government expresses deep concern at the recent attacks against diplomats and diplomatic missions in several places. Such violence cannot be justified regardless of the motivation.

Putting an end to sexual violence against women in armed conflict is another issue that warrants serious attention. Wartime sexual violence is a fundamental infringement of human rights and is, in fact, an affront to human dignity and integrity. History has left important lessons that warn against such egregious acts.

The Republic of Korea would like to urge the United Nations system and all Member States to do their utmost to put an end to such atrocities, not only by taking all measures to protect women and girls in armed conflict, but also by providing effective remedies and reparations for victims and ending impunity by bringing the offenders to justice in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Both a sound historical consciousness and a heartfelt soul-searching into any past wrongdoings are required in order to establish solid peace and stability between nations. A country's true valour is proven when it confronts the dark side of its history and endeavours to rectify past wrongdoings.

It is the firm conviction of the Korean Government that respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, should be the guiding principle for stable international relations.

No country should abuse international legal procedures or the concept of the rule of law in order to infringe upon the territorial integrity and sovereignty of other countries or distort historical justice.

The Republic of Korea is actively contributing to the global efforts being undertaken in pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons. The Seoul Nuclear Security Summit held last March brought together leaders from across the world to galvanize the vision and the determination of the international community to achieve a peaceful world without nuclear terrorism. During the Summit, the Korean Government played a leading role in forging a consensus to take important practical steps, such as the substantial reduction of nuclear materials, the promotion of the universality of international conventions and cooperation to combat illicit trafficking of nuclear materials. I am delighted that the High-level Meeting on Countering Nuclear Terrorism, which was convened this morning, has provided new momentum to further energize the efforts seen at the Seoul Summit for the prevention of nuclear and radiological terrorism.

Furthermore, existing and emerging threats in cyberspace, such as rampant transnational cybercrime and potential cyber conflicts, present a serious challenge. It is therefore imperative that the international community address those threats. By hosting the 2013 Conference on Cyberspace, the Republic of Korea hopes to contribute in multiple ways to the ongoing global efforts to maximize the benefits of digital networks. We further believe that the event will provide an unparalleled opportunity to pool our efforts to cope with threats stemming from the misuse of information and communication technologies.

The North Korean nuclear programme continues to pose a threat, not only to the security of the Korean peninsula and North-East Asia, but indeed to

the very basis of the international non-proliferation regime. As long as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to pursue its nuclear and missile programmes, achieving the goal of sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula and in the region will remain far off. Unfortunately, the international community's aspirations were shattered once again when the Democratic People's Republic of Korea launched a long-range missile in April 2012. In response to that provocative action, the Security Council reaffirmed that the international community will not tolerate the continued pursuit by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of its nuclear and missile programmes by issuing a firm and resolute presidential statement in an unprecedentedly swift manner (S/PRST/2012/13).

We urge with concern that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should take concrete measures aimed at denuclearization, which will also open an avenue to improving the livelihood of its people. At the same time, we sincerely hope that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will listen to the international community's call for the improvement of that country's human rights situation, as repeatedly affirmed in the relevant United Nations resolutions.

As a country that has risen from the ashes of war, we have learned the values of peace and security. In that context, we earnestly hope to have the opportunity to promote such values by serving as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2013-2014 term. The Republic of Korea is determined to fulfil that role with the greatest enthusiasm and devotion. We hope that States Members of the United Nations understand and support our bid for membership in the Council.

We are united by the ideals set out in the United Nations Charter. In pursuit of international peace and security, the continued promotion of social and economic development and the promotion of human rights, we should embrace a spirit of cooperation and tolerance, with the United Nations at the centre of international efforts to that end. The Republic of Korea will persist in fully playing its part in the invaluable work of the United Nations, taking on the various challenges that humanity will continue to confront.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz bin Abdullah, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Prince Abdulaziz bin Abdullah (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it gives me great pleasure to convey to Mr. Vuk Jeremić my sincere congratulations on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session. We wish him every success in the performance of his duties and responsibilities, particularly under the current critical circumstances in which the international community finds itself at present. I would also take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to his predecessor, Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, who fulfilled his mandate with wisdom and professionalism. Moreover, it gives me pleasure to commend once more the great efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in serving the Organization and promoting its message aimed at achieving international peace and security, especially under difficult and critical circumstances.

The Palestinian issue, which is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, has been a constant challenge for the United Nations since its inception more than 60 years ago. The cause of the stalemate is Israel's attitude. We all know how intransigent Israel has been in its positions, which have undermined negotiations and have emptied all discussions of any meaning. Moreover, Israel has taken unilateral actions that could lead to more complications in the occupied Palestinian territories and to undermining the efforts of Arab countries and others in the international community to reach a just, comprehensive and lasting solution by establishing an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

The situation requires that the international community, as represented by the United Nations, move quickly in order to put an end to the calamity that the situation represents for the Palestinian people and provide all manner of support and assistance for the Palestinian Authority. My country finds that Palestine must receive full membership in the United Nations, as that is its natural and legitimate right, and we should all help the Palestinians to achieve that objective. For its part, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is sparing no effort in fulfilling its commitment to the peace process with respect to our Palestinian brethren by providing various types of support and assistance.

The issue of Syria is a very complex and exacerbated one and has led to the killing and displacement of tens of thousands of people. The international community has shown its inability to act, because of divisions in

the Security Council and because of the failure of all Arab and international initiatives as a result of the intransigence of the Syrian regime, which still believes that it can use the power of its security apparatus to end the crisis without taking into account the high humanitarian cost.

Since the first day of the crisis, my country has been dealing with it in accordance with the framework and resolutions of international legitimacy and with full respect for the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law, through the Gulf Cooperation Council, the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the outcomes of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit meeting, held in Mecca in August, on the status of Syria.

The success of Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi's efforts will depend on the implementation of a new strategy and a clear plan that aims at achieving a peaceful transition of power. The Security Council must provide him with the support he needs to deal with the Syrian crisis at both the political and the humanitarian levels.

We call upon our brothers in Yemen to continue to take the same positive and constructive approach and to stand against any foreign interference in their internal affairs in order to achieve security and stability and economic development throughout Yemen. Meanwhile, we call upon the international community to fulfil its pledges to Yemen by providing it with all forms of support and assistance to achieve those goals. Saudi Arabia reaffirms its full support for all international efforts undertaken in that context. We hosted the donors' conference, held earlier this month, and participated in the Friends of Yemen conference held at the United Nations on 27 September 2012.

The Iranian nuclear crisis is one of the most important challenges threatening international peace and security in general and the security and stability of the Arab Gulf region in particular. In that context, my country supports the ongoing efforts of the five plus one group to peacefully resolve the crisis in a manner that guarantees Iran and all countries in the region the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in accordance with the criteria and procedures of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and under its supervision. On the other hand, we urge Iran to respond to those efforts and to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions by cooperating with IAEA inspectors monitoring its nuclear facilities in order to put an end to the crisis.

In that regard, Saudi Arabia reaffirms the importance of making the Middle East a zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We also stress the need for Israel to place its nuclear facilities under the international inspection and safeguards of the IAEA and to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The security and stability of the Arab Gulf region will be reached only through the establishment of good relations based on good-neighbourliness and constructive cooperation. Also, Iran must end its occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates. We must solve that issue peacefully, either through bilateral negotiations or by referring the issue to the International Court of Justice.

The phenomenon of terrorism is one of the most important challenges that we currently face and the most important issue confronting the entire international community. We must eliminate terrorism in all its forms and sources. In order to fight that scourge and uproot it completely, the efforts of the Kingdom have not been limited to fighting it locally. We have reinforced efforts at all levels, whether regional or international, including by hosting an international conference in 2005 that resulted in many recommendations, including the establishment of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, which was launched in New York on 19 September 2011.

Our world today urgently needs to spread the culture of tolerance and understanding and dialogue between the followers of different religions. Our efforts in that regard are led by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, aimed at achieving a dialogue between religions and cultures. That was reflected in the 2008 World Conference on Dialogue, held in Madrid. There was also a call for a high-level meeting hosted by the United Nations to promote dialogue and tolerance between different cultures and religions. Our call for mutual understanding, the acceptance of others and coexistence has led to the establishment in Vienna of the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Dialogue among Followers of Religions and Cultures. In addition, the foresight of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques was demonstrated by his announcement of the establishment of a centre for dialogue among

Islamic sects at the fourth special session of the Islamic Summit Conference, held in Mecca in August 2012.

In that regard, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia strongly condemns the production by an irresponsible group of an offensive movie about the Prophet Muhammad — peace be upon him. The Kingdom asserts its rejection of all acts that offend or disdain religions and their sacred symbols. In that context, the Kingdom renews its call to enact the necessary laws and legislation that forbid the defamation and disdain of religions and their sacred symbols.

Meanwhile, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia condemns the acts of violence against the United States foreign missions and any attack against any foreign or diplomatic mission around the world for any reason, regardless of the disagreement involved. Such acts prevent missions from carrying out their diplomatic functions and international interests.

In the light of the ongoing discussion on the question of global economic, social and human development, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through its participation in the Group of Twenty, emphasizes its support of the efforts aiming to stabilize the global economy, to advance world trade, to take further action to liberalize trade and to avoid protectionist policies that impede the efforts to end the global financial crisis. Meanwhile, we should not ignore the matter of helping developing States to overcome the consequences of that crisis.

Furthermore, my country believes that efforts to reform the international financial, monetary and trade system should be channelled through existing institutions in order to build a global economic system that is based on a new partnership between developing and developed countries. That partnership should be established on the basis of cooperation, justice, equality, transparency and mutual benefits.

Concerning energy security, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has spared no effort in the pursuit of stability in the world oil markets in a manner that has served the development and growth of the global economy. In that regard, we cannot ignore the fact that energy security is not limited to the security of supply, but includes the security of demand as well. My country believes that there should be a dialogue between energy producers and consumers in order to avoid volatility and speculation in prices, and to avoid imposing discriminatory taxes on oil. We welcome the establishment of the Secretariat of the International Energy Forum headquarters in Riyadh in order to promote such dialogue.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as one of the United Nations founding countries, has since its inception participated in its meetings and conferences on the basis of its belief in the Organization's noble principles and the role it can play in service to humanity and its advancement.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will be at the vanguard of any international efforts aimed at implementing and achieving the principles and purposes of the United Nations and achieving the security, stability and prosperity to which we all aspire.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.